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- ART. IV. — 1. *Public Health.* Reports of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council. 1858–1867. 10 vols. 8vo.
2. *Twentieth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board.* 1867–1868. 8vo.
3. *First Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women, in Agriculture.* With Appendix. Part I. Appendix, Part II., to First Report. 1868. 2 vols. fol.

IN a speech at an agricultural dinner in Shrewsbury, on the 16th of January last, Lord Granville, a member of the present ministry, speaking in a characteristic vein of cheerful optimism, said : —

“ He had known England during a political life extending over thirty years. He had seen the country ruled by different ministers ; he had seen different parties in power ; he had seen it not insensible to the occurrence of great and portentous events in other parts of the world ; he had seen it suffering from adverse elements, and from a deficient season of harvest ; and yet during the whole of that time it had appeared to him that England, of which they were all so proud, had been increasing in all that constitutes the greatness of an empire. Its wealth had been greatly increased, the level of general intelligence had been raised, the manners of the people softened, and the hostile feeling between class and class had been done away with.” *

Such a state of society as is here depicted appears eminently satisfactory, but another and very different view of the social condition of England is presented by Mr. Goschen, the President of the Poor Law Board, in a speech of the 21st of December last, on his re-election to Parliament after taking office. He said : —

“ I have been called to fill an arduous and responsible office. I do not disguise from myself the full weight of that responsibility. Constantly increasing rates, constantly increasing pauperism, millions of money spent, yet without satisfaction, and, infinitely worse, millions of human beings whose very name implies a degradation even in their own eyes, as recipients of parochial relief, — such is the subject-matter with which a President of the Poor Law Board is called upon to deal.

* Report in the Daily News, January 18, 1869.

His sphere is on the dark side of our social system. His province is what I may call the bankruptcy of the million, and it appears to me that the Poor Law, like the Bankruptcy Law, can never give complete satisfaction, because both deal with something deplorable in itself. The utmost we can expect to obtain is to make the best of a bad job. I hope and believe that much may be done to grapple more effectually with that which is a growing evil, for I must speak of a growing evil when we have to face the terrible fact that, in the short space of two years, the pauperism of the metropolis has increased twenty per cent, and that not less than 30,000 paupers * — a number equal to the population of a good-sized town — have been added to the numbers of those who, I might almost say, are closing in upon the industrious portions of certain districts of London, till the ratepayer of to-day himself becomes the pauper of to-morrow." †

No one will accuse Mr. Goschen of exaggeration, but the condition of society indicated by his words is one that may well be called not only deplorable, but alarming. A large portion of the people of England live in poverty so great as to be always on the verge of pauperism. A majority of the working class, in one of the most industrious and richest countries of the world, are habitually underfed, badly housed, and insufficiently clothed. The increase of wealth, of which Lord Granville speaks, is accompanied by an increase of poverty, with its concomitants of suffering, pauperism, ignorance, immorality, and crime. The efforts of the government through the poor-law organization, the efforts of individuals through multitudinous private charities, are ineffectual to prevent the growth of this national malady. The source of the evil is not affected by them.

The question of the issue of this condition of things is of interest not to England alone, but to all civilized nations alike. It is not merely that the fact of the mass of a people falling into such a state is a discredit to the principles upon which modern society is organized, but also that such wide-spread poverty and ignorance produce moral and economic effects

* From the returns of the Poor Law Board, it appears that in the first week of April, 1869, there were in the unions and parishes of London 147,086 paupers, in the proportion of 36,464 in-door to 110,622 out-door. This was an increase of 1,549 upon the numbers of the corresponding period of last year, of 6,297 upon those of 1867, and of 42,753 upon those of 1866.

† Report in the Times, December 22, 1868.

which are not confined in their operation to the limits of the country in which they have their origin. Whatever threatens or injures the moral advance and material prosperity of one of the leading nations of the world threatens and injures those of all others in a greater or less degree.

According to the census tables of 1861, the total population of England and Wales amounted to just over twenty millions of persons (20,066,000). Of these a little less than half (9,289,000) were persons either possessing independent incomes or earning wages; the remainder, principally of course women and children, were dependent on the others.* The increase of population since 1861 may be safely estimated at not less than one per cent annually (the total increase during the preceding decade was twelve per cent), so that at the present time there are probably somewhat less than ten millions of persons in England and Wales who have an income derived from capital, or directly from labor, and somewhat less than twelve million without incomes, dependent on the others.†

Now of the ten million in England and Wales who are in receipt of income or wages, it appears from an examination of the census tables that about one fifth are persons with independent incomes, and about four fifths in receipt of wages.

The population of England and Wales, then, may be roughly divided — and when dealing with such large numbers a rough estimate or division is all that is required to afford safe ground for correct inferences — into two great sections, — one embracing the aristocracy, the professional and commercial classes, the wealthy and well off, the salaried, persons of independent means of whatever name, who amount, including their wives and children, to about five millions; the other embracing all manual laborers, all persons dependent on their wages for livelihood, with their wives and children, all paupers and criminals, and all persons without any recognized means of support, amounting altogether to about seventeen millions.

Such being the approximate general distribution of the popu-

* No note need be taken of 151,000 persons concerning whose position nothing was ascertained.

† The same proportion holds good if we take the numbers for the whole of Great Britain and Ireland; that is, there are a little more than five persons with income or wages to every six persons without income throughout the whole kingdom.

lation, it becomes important to ascertain as nearly as possible the total amount of income of each class, and the average income of the wage-receiving class. The returns of the income tax afford the means of forming a tolerably exact estimate of the incomes of the upper and middle classes. These returns have been discussed by Mr. Baxter, in his essay on "National Income,"* and the following table shows the result of his analysis.

UPPER AND MIDDLE CLASSES: DISTRIBUTION OF INCOMES.
ENGLAND AND WALES, 1867.

| Class of Income. | Number of Assessments. | Aggregate Annual Income. |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|
| I. LARGE INCOMES. | | £ |
| 1. £ 5000 to £ 50,000 and upwards | 7,500 | 111,104,000 |
| 2. £ 1000 to £ 5000 | 42,000 | 69,440,000 |
| II. MIDDLE INCOMES. | | |
| £ 300 to £ 1000 | 150,000 | 72,912,000 |
| III. SMALL INCOMES. | | |
| 1. £ 100 to £ 300 | 850,500 | 93,744,000 |
| 2. Under £ 100, below the Income Tax | 1,003,000 | 60,000,000 |
| Total | 2,053,000 | 407,200,000 |

The question of the amount of wages received by the laboring class is difficult to determine, owing to the different rates prevailing in the same occupation in different parts of the country ; to the great irregularity in employment, so that large numbers of laborers fail to earn full wages the whole year round ; and, finally, to the fact that the powers of laborers in many branches of work diminish at a comparatively early period, after which their wages decrease. In some trades a man is disabled by the time he is fifty years old, or even earlier ; in others, as in agricultural labor, he is rarely an effective worker after sixty.

Mr. J. Bailey Denton, who has given much attention to the subject, makes the following statement, in a letter published in the *Daily News*, October 1, 1868 :—

"The weekly earnings of different laborers which fairly represents

* "National Income. The United Kingdom." By R. Dudley Baxter, M. A. London: Macmillan & Co. 1868.

the class known as 'industrial' operatives of towns — including piece-work — may be stated to be as follows:—

| | s. | d. | s. | d. |
|---|------------|----|-------|------|
| Carpenters and joiners | from 18 | 0 | to 28 | 0 |
| Sawyers | " 21 | 0 | " 26 | 0 |
| Bricklayers | average 31 | | | 6 |
| Bricklayers' laborers | " | | | 19 6 |
| Brickmakers | from 24 | 0 | to 30 | 0 |
| Masons | average 30 | | | 0 |
| Masons' laborers | " | | | 17 6 |
| Gardeners (exclusive of head gardeners) | " | | | 16 0 |
| Smiths | from 26 | 0 | to 28 | 0 |
| Brassfounders | " 24 | 0 | " 33 | 0 |
| Painters | average 28 | | | 0 |
| Bootmakers | from 21 | 0 | to 26 | 0 |
| Tallow-workers (laborers) | average 18 | | | 0 |
| Engineers and boiler-makers | from 25 | 0 | to 30 | 0 |
| Coalminers | " 17 | 0 | " 27 | 0 |
| Quarrymen (slate) | " 18 | 0 | " 23 | 0 |
| Carters | " 17 | 0 | " 19 | 0 |
| Railway laborers (maintenance) | " 15 | 0 | " 20 | 0 |
| Butchers' men | " 16 | 0 | " 18 | 0 |
| Police constables | average 20 | | | 0 |
| Bakers' men | from 21 | 0 | to 26 | 6 |
| Cotton-workers | average 18 | | | 6 |
| Silk-workers | from 17 | 0 | to 24 | 0" |

In the preceding list, Mr. Denton takes no account of the diminution in the annual income of the laborer from slack work, which is a large element in the account. It would be a very moderate estimate to put it at, at least, ten per cent; probably it is nearer twenty per cent.*

In a letter to the *Times* of December 16, 1868, Mr. H. G. Somerby, Secretary to the Trustees of the Peabody Fund, says:—

"I have this day obtained from the superintendents of the various blocks of buildings erected by the trust in various districts of London returns of the occupants of every apartment, and the result shows the number of workingmen and laborers for weekly hire to be as follows: 17 shoemakers, 16 blacksmiths, 7 watchmakers, 2 brushmakers, 7

* Mr. Frederick Purdy, principal of the Statistical Office of the Poor Law Board, in the *Statistical Journal*, Vol. XXIV. p. 353, states that the number of paupers in the five most agrarian districts of England is greater in February than in August by 425,000 against 370,000, or 55,000 persons. This number represents the prevalence of the custom of turning off laborers in the season of slack work.

tailors, 7 painters, 1 glazier, 6 letter-carriers, 12 policemen, 55 porters, 3 draymen, 14 dressmakers and needlewomen, 20 charwomen, 6 compositors, 2 millwrights, 1 staymaker, 1 gasmeter maker, 123 laborers, 4 shopmen, 1 upholsterer, 2 glasscutters, 5 coopers, 3 corkcutters, 1 beadle of a market, 3 boiler-makers, 1 beltmaker, 1 cook, 2 horse-keepers, 2 stevedores, 13 carmen, 2 timekeepers, 19 mariners, 4 ropemakers, 3 riggers, 1 milk-carrier, 1 brewer, 1 window-blind maker, 6 shipwrights, 3 engine-turners, 1 bricklayer, 3 tidewaiters, 2 shipkeepers, 3 lightermen, 1 tinplate-worker, 1 candlemaker, 4 carpenters, 2 bakers to confectioners, 1 ship-scraper, 2 sailmakers, 5 bakers, 1 plumber, and 1 French polisher.

“The average wages earned by these various classes of working men is a fraction above 20s. a week. Some, such as the painters, glaziers, compositors, and millwrights, and others, get more when in full work; but as a rule only a proportion of them are fortunate enough to have continuous yearly employment. The lowest wages obtained by others in the Peabody houses is 9s. a week. Out of their wages each has a family to maintain, which on an average consists of four or five individuals.”

It will be observed that the average obtained by Mr. Somerby, from actual inquiry conducted among workmen and laborers of a high standard of industry, — for only such are admitted to the benefits of the Peabody Trust, — is considerably lower than that given by Mr. Bailey Denton.

Any estimate of the total amount of the income of the laboring class can be but approximate. Mr. Baxter, in the work already cited, discusses the question at some length, and gives the table of results which will be found on the next page. His figures are drawn mainly from the Census Tables, and he reckons the income, not at the full sum of the weekly wages, but with various deductions. It seems probable that he rather under-estimates the sum of the earnings.

The total income of England and Wales, according to this and the preceding table, amounts to £ 661,929,000, of which £ 407,200,000 is the income of about two millions of persons of the upper and middle classes, and £ 254,729,000 is the income, in the form of wages, of about seven and three quarter millions of the working class.*

* If these figures be taken as a basis of calculation, it appears that less than

NUMBER AND EARNINGS OF MANUAL-LABOR CLASS IN
ENGLAND AND WALES, 1867.

| Employment. | Numbers. | Average Net Annual Earnings of Individual. | Total Net Earnings, less all Deductions. |
|--|-----------|--|--|
| 1. HIGHER SKILLED LABOR . . (Instrument-makers, engine-drivers, book trades, iron and other manufacturers, building trades, bread-making.) | 1,123,000 | £ 60 to 73 | £ 56,149,000 |
| 2. LOWER SKILLED LABOR . . . (Carriers by water, coach and harness makers, hardware, cotton, woollen, and other manufactures, carriers by land, shoemakers, tailors, miners, servants.) | 3,819,000 | 46 to 52 | 127,921,000 |
| 3. AGRICULTURE AND UNSKILLED LABOR (Farm laborers, quarriers, soldiers, laundresses and needlewomen, &c., &c.) | 2,843,000 | 20 to 41 | 70,659,000 |
| Total | 7,785,000 | | 254,729,000 |

It would be a mistake to attribute precise accuracy to these tables. But, making allowance for even greater error in them than probably exists, certain important broad conclusions may

50,000 persons out of nearly 10,000,000 receive between one third and one fourth of the whole income. If we add to the manual-labor class the number of persons not belonging to it whose income is under £100, making 8,788,000 in all, we find that 89 per cent of the classes in receipt of income and wages obtain but 47 per cent of the total income. The average amount of income or wages of the 9,000,000 of those whose annual income or earnings are less than £100 is about £35. Doubling their number by the addition of those dependent upon them, it follows that this enormous mass of the people of England, not far from 18,000,000 in all, is supported on an average annual sum which cannot vary greatly from £17 to £18, or about one shilling a day for each individual. If we take the class with incomes over £100, and estimate its numbers, including dependents, at 2,100,000, it appears that the average annual income of each individual is not less than £165. But dividing this class into two sections, the first comprising those with incomes from £100 to £300, we find the average income of each individual, including dependents, belonging to this section, whose number amounts to about 1,700,000, to be between £55 and £56; while of the second section, namely, that of those whose incomes are over £300, and who, with their dependents, number about 400,000, the average annual income is not less than £633. However far from the exact truth these figures may be, they are not without value as more or less correct illustrations of existing facts.

be drawn from them. An extraordinary inequality in the distribution of wealth is apparent at a glance, and an enormous disproportion between the numbers of the rich and the poor. It is also apparent that a large majority of the inhabitants are poor, — poor not merely relatively, but positively. The great pyramid of English wealth rests on a wide base of poverty and pauperism.

It would be easy to adduce proof of the correctness of these broad conclusions, if there were likely to be any serious question of it. But there is no dispute as to the immense inequality in the distribution of English wealth, and little doubt as to the fact that this inequality is increasing. The members of the laboring classes, as a rule, are unable to lay by enough from their wages to form an accumulation of capital. The capital of the country, or such part of it as is used as an advance for the expenses of production, being in the hands of a small number of persons in proportion to the whole population, its profits, accumulating from year to year, make the rich richer, and widen the distance between them and the poor.

A phrase that has been much used of late is, that the rich are growing richer and the poor poorer. The first part of the phrase is correct, but there is no necessary connection between its two clauses. If there be a progressive increase of poverty, it may be due to far other causes than the increase of the wealth of the rich. Indeed, it would only be through the increase of the wealth of the rich by unjust means, by direct spoliation, or by rendering to the laborer an unfairly small compensation for his share in the work of production, that the increase of poverty could truly be said to result from the increase of the riches of the rich. It would seem that the increase of capital, even if massed in comparatively few hands, in a country largely engaged in production, ought to have a tendency to diminish the poverty of the laboring class, by forming a larger wages-fund from which labor was to receive its compensation. But the condition of a society may be such that the increase of the wages-fund exercises little influence in raising the rate of wages. And such a condition of things probably now exists in England.

The grounds of this conclusion are as follows : The population. CIX. — NO. 224.

tion of Great Britain appears to be increasing at a rate too rapid to be kept up with by the progress of improvement in production, using this term in so large a sense as to include every moral and material agency which has a tendency to supply new motives or afford new means of production.*

It was long since pointed out by Mr. Mill that, whenever population makes a more rapid increase than improvement in production, there is a diminishing return to industry. This diminished return falls on the laborer and not on the capitalist. The increase of population increases the competition among the laborers, and the capitalist secures the advantage of this competition in the stationary or lowered rate of wages. The accumulation of his capital is not necessarily used in giving employment to additional laborers; but it may be, and in the present condition of English industry and social customs often is, invested in such a manner as to afford no advantage to the laboring class. Thus the capital from which the wages-fund is derived augments, but there is little or no increase in the rate of wages.

During the last thirty years the capital invested in agriculture has greatly increased, and farming processes, as is well known, have improved, requiring, in some cases, more skilled labor than was formerly employed. Within this period there has been a nominal rise in the average wages of agricultural laborers, to the amount, perhaps, of a shilling or eighteen pence a week, or of from ten to fifteen per cent.† But,

* "In round numbers, about 240,000 persons are annually added to the resident population in Great Britain. The additional wheat supply required for that number, at an average of six bushels per head, amounts to nearly 180,000 quarters, which, at an average English yield of twenty-eight bushels per acre, represents the produce of upwards of 50,000 acres, and of a much larger average at a lower rate of production." — Mr. Fonblanque's Report, accompanying the Agricultural Returns of Great Britain for 1868, p. 9.

† Mr. Purdy, in an elaborate paper in the *Statistical Journal*, September, 1861, estimated the average weekly wages of men employed in agricultural labor in thirty-four counties, in 1837, at 10s. 4d., and in 1860, at 11s. 7d. Since 1860 there has been a further advance, and the average wages, between a maximum of 18s. in the northern counties, and a minimum of 9s. in the southern, may be reckoned at between 12s. and 13s. See statements concerning wages in the First Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture, 1867. Part I.

Mr. Bailey Denton, in the letter already cited, says: "I find that at present the

although this is apparently a considerable rise, it is to be remembered that during this period the value of money has declined, so that its purchasing power is less than of old, and though there has been a fall in the price of some articles required by the laborer, there has been a rise in others. Bread is but very little cheaper; meat and milk are dearer; clothing and fuel have slightly declined in price.* Meanwhile there has been an advance in the standard of living among the upper classes, altogether disproportionate to the advance in the laborer's wages, thus widening the gulf between employer and employed.

But whether the wages of the laborer have positively risen or not, and whether his present condition be better or worse than it was twenty or thirty years ago, the fact remains that the condition of the laboring classes taken generally — that is,

average weekly wages of the ordinary farm laborer vary from 10s. 6d. in the mid-southern and southwestern districts, including Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, and Dorset, which are the worst paid counties, to 14s. 6d. in the northeastern district of England, which includes Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire, the best paid counties. These figures do not include the higher grade of laborers, such as bailiffs, managers, engineers, and other special workmen, but they cover the wages of shepherds, horsekeepers, and herdsmen, as well as all descriptions of field men required on the farm, and who receive a weekly or daily pay. The mean weekly money wages of able-bodied men, not employed at piecework, throughout the whole of England, closely approximates 12s. 6d."

The following extract from a letter in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of January 22, 1869, indicates that the minimum wages of the hind is in some districts lower than supposed by Mr. Denton: "The clergy of many counties could tell of the constant struggles of their poor parishioners to keep body and soul together. Take the case of Herefordshire, for example, and especially the western side of the county. There the farm laborer's ordinary wages are 9s. a week; his ordinary home is two small rooms, through the thatched roof of which the rain drops on to a floor half mud and half broken stones; his daily food, dry bread and rough cider; his normal condition one of ignorance and squalor. Much of this may doubtless be attributed to general causes, which operate more or less strongly in all purely agricultural districts. But in Herefordshire much is also due to its system of farm-letting, and the extent to which game-preserving is carried."

* The following sentence is from an article entitled "Remarks on the Physique of the Rural Population," by the distinguished historian, the Rev. Charles Merivale, in the *Contemporary Review* for February, 1869: "The ordinary wages of the laborer are still regulated precisely by the price of corn; and, as it seems to me, have not risen either positively or relatively." And again: "I cannot say that during the twenty years over which my observation extends there has been any sensible improvement in the food of the poor agricultural laborer in my district." Evidence similar in its character abounds.

the condition of a majority of the population of England — is to the last degree deplorable. The wages are insufficient to support the laborers as a class and their families in health and comfort, to promote the formation of habits upon which moral progress depends, to encourage independence, or to afford them a ground of hope for the improvement of their condition, without demanding of them efforts far beyond the average capacity of human nature.

It is difficult for those who have never known the pangs, the weariness, the moral enervation, and the intellectual dulness, consequent upon the pressure of continued want, to enter in imagination into the real life of the poor. But if it be difficult for those who are rich or well off, the cultivated and intelligent, so to realize the wretchedness of those upon whose ill-requited daily toil the very prosperity of the upper classes depends, as not merely to feel their responsibility and their duty toward the poor, but to recognize the dangers to themselves and to the state which the present condition of society implies, how much more difficult is it for the poor themselves to feel the force of those moral considerations which are constantly urged, and too often urged in a spirit of mere selfishness, by regard to which they might achieve some improvement of their condition? With what face can we urge economy and thrift upon a man bringing up a family on from ten to twenty shillings a week? How can it be hoped to check population by preaching continence to those whose habitations render the preservation of modest habits an impossibility? How can it be hoped to stay intemperance, when the cheap indulgence which stimulates the vacant mind or deadens the dull sense of weariness is the solitary outlet from the habitual cheerlessness of forlorn days? A low physical condition induces a low moral condition, and restraints which avail with those who are well off have no power over the very poor.

When one writes or speaks in this way in England, and points out the progressive danger to society arising from the condition of the mass of the population being such that neither physical nor moral health can exist among it, he is frequently met with the assertions that there is a great deal of exaggeration concerning the wretchedness of the poor, and that measures for

their improvement are now in progress, which will be sufficient before very long to bring about a remedy for confessed evils.

Against the charge of exaggeration, testimony may be adduced which is not likely to be questioned. Fifteen years ago the eminent surgeon, Mr. John Simon, now the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, and at that time the Officer of Health to the city, wrote as follows in the preface to a volume in which were republished his reports relating to the sanitary condition of London.* Mr. Simon's character, wide experience, and long, useful services in the cause of sanitary improvement, give the highest authority and weight to his words.

"This national prevalence of sanitary neglect is a very grievous fact ; and although I pretend to no official concern in anything beyond the city boundaries, I cannot forego the present opportunity of saying a few words to bespeak for it the reader's attention. I would beg any educated person to consider what are the conditions in which alone animal life can thrive ; to learn, by personal inspection, how far these conditions are realized for the masses of our population, and to form for himself a conscientious judgment as to the need for great, if even almost revolutionary, reforms. Let any such person devote an hour to visiting some very poor neighborhood in the metropolis, or in almost any of our large towns. Let him breathe its air, taste its water, eat its bread. Let him think of human life struggling there for years. Let him fancy what it would be to himself to live there, in that beastly degradation of stink, fed with such bread, drinking such water. Let him enter some house there at hazard, and, heeding where he treads, follow the guidance of his outraged nose to the yard (if there be one), or the cellar. Let him talk to the inmates ; let him hear what is thought of the bone-boiler next door, or the slaughter-house behind ; what of the sewer-grating before the door, what of the Irish basket-makers upstairs, twelve in a room, who came in after the hopping and got fever ; what of the artisan's dead body, stretched on his widow's one bed, beside her living children.

"Let him, if he have a heart for the duties of manhood and patriotism, gravely reflect whether such sickening evils as an hour's inquiry will have shown him ought to be the habit of our laboring population ; whether the legislature, which his voice helps to constitute, is doing all that might be done to palliate these wrongs ; whether it be not a jarring discord in the civilization we boast, a worse than pagan savage-

* Sanitary Condition of the City of London, 1848-1853. London : John W. Parker & Son. 1854. 8vo. pp. xl., 312.

ness in the Christianity we profess, that such things continue in the midst of us scandalously neglected, and that the interests of human life, except against wilful violence, are almost uncared for by the law.

“And let not the inquirer too easily admit what will be urged by less earnest persons as their pretext for inaction, — that such evils are inalienable from poverty. Let him, in visiting those homes of our laboring population, inquire into the actual rent paid for them, dog-holes as they are; and, studying the financial experience of model dormitories and model lodgings, let him reckon what that rent can purchase. He will soon have misgivings as to dirt being cheap in the market, and cleanliness unattainably expensive.

“Yet what if it be so? Shift the title of the grievance, is the fact less insufferable? If there be citizens so destitute that they can afford to live only where they must straightway die, renting the twentieth straw heap in some lightless fever-bin, or squatting amid rotten soakage, or breathing from the cesspool and the sewer; so destitute that they can buy no water, that milk and bread must be impoverished to meet their means of purchase, that the drugs sold them for sickness must be rubbish or poison; surely no civilized community dare avert itself from the care of this abject orphanage. And, *ruat cælum*, let the principle be followed whithersoever it may lead, that Christian society leaves none of its children helpless. If such and such conditions of food or dwelling are absolutely inconsistent with healthy life, what more final test of pauperism can there be, or what clearer right to public succor, than that the subject's pecuniary means fall short of providing him other conditions than those? It may be that competition has screwed down the rate of wages below what will purchase indispensable food and wholesome lodgement. Of this, as fact, I am no judge; but to its meaning, if fact, I can speak. All labor below that mark is masked pauperism. Whatever the employer saves is gained at the public expense. When, under such circumstances, the laborer or his wife or child spends an occasional month or two in the hospital, that some fever infection may work itself out, or that the impending loss of an eye or a limb may be averted by animal food;* or when he gets various aid from the Board of Guardians, in all sorts of preventable illness, and eventually for the expenses of interment; it is the public that, too late for the man's health or independence, pays the arrears of wage which should have hindered this suffering and sorrow.

* Twenty years' daily experience of hospital surgery enables me to say, from personal knowledge, that our wards and out-patient rooms are never free from painful illustrations of the effects of insufficient nutrition; cases, in fact, of chronic-starvation disease among the poor; such disease as Magendie imitated in his celebrated experiments, by feeding animals on an exclusively non-azotized diet.

"Probably on no point of political economy is there more general concurrence of opinion than against any legislative interference with the price of labor. But I would venture to submit, for the consideration of abler judges than myself, that before wages can be safely left to find their own level in the struggles of an unrestricted competition, the law should be rendered absolute and available in safeguards for the ignorant poor, — first, against those deteriorations of staple food which enable the retailer to disguise starvation to his customers by apparent cheapenings of bulk ; secondly, against those conditions of lodgement which are inconsistent with decency and health.

"But if I have addressed myself to this objection, partly because, to the very limited extent in which it starts from a true premise, it deserves reply ; and partly because I wish emphatically to declare my conviction that such evils as I denounce are not the more to be tolerated for their rising in unwilling pauperism rather than in willing filth ; yet I doubt whether poverty be so important an element in the case as some people imagine. And although I have referred especially to a poor neighborhood, — because here it is that knowledge and personal refinement will have least power to compensate for the insufficiencies of public law, — yet I have no hesitation in saying that sanitary mismanagement spreads very appreciable evils high in the middle ranks of society ; and from some of the consequences, so far as I am aware, no station can call itself exempt.

"The fact is, as I have said, that, except against wilful violence, life is practically very little cared for by the law. Fragments of legislation there are, indeed, in all directions ; enough to establish precedents ; enough to testify some half-conscious possession of a principle ; but, for usefulness, little beyond this. The statutes tell that now and then there has reached to high places the wail of physical suffering. They tell that our law-makers, to the tether of a very scanty knowledge, have, not unwillingly, moved to the redress of some clamorous wrong. But, tested by any scientific standard of what should be the completeness of sanitary legislation, or tested by any personal endeavor to procure the legal correction of gross and glaring evils, their insufficiencies, I do not hesitate to say, constitute a national scandal, and perhaps, in respect to their consequences, something not far removed from a national sin."

The condition of society here depicted could not be set forth in stronger or clearer words. But, it is said, great improvements in sanitary matters have been made, many of them due to Mr. Simon's own efforts during the last fifteen years, and the state of things exhibited in the preceding passage has

been greatly modified for the better. Doubtless it is true that in late years many local improvements have been carried out, many needed reforms commenced, the public sense has been aroused, as never before, to the need of exertion in behalf of the poor, legislative action has seconded individual effort, and private charity has lavished stores of wealth in the attempt to dam the swelling current of misery. But all these efforts have been ineffectual to prevent the growth of the evils against which they were directed. Not yet even has the intelligent part of the community risen to the sense of the need of what Mr. Simon justly called "almost revolutionary reforms." Prejudices of various sorts, religious bigotry, the selfish lust of gain, careless of the well-being of mankind, the improvident waste of money spent in demoralizing subsidies to the poor, and many other influences, have contributed to prevent any considerable improvement in the general condition of the laboring classes, either in the cities or in the country. What has been done is but a trifle to what was required; and even that trifle has failed of its full effect. The tide of poverty has successively swept down and over the puny banks erected to resist its encroachments. The condition of the laboring classes in the country at large has not materially improved during the last few years, and the numerical mass of wretched poor has increased.

In Mr. Simon's Report as Medical Officer of the Privy Council for the year 1863, some account is given of the results of a systematic and continuous inquiry, which had been in progress for five years, into the circumstances which regulate the distribution of disease in England. One of the most important portions of this inquiry related to conditions of nourishment, and in particular to the food of the poorer laboring classes.

"As the inquiry," writes Mr. Simon, "specially related to the feeding of our lowest-paid laboring classes, it was to be expected that evidence of very poor diet would often be met with; and such proved to be the fact. Throughout some of the examined classes, and in appreciable sections of the remainder, the diet was, to say the best of it, of doubtful permanent sufficiency for health. For the examined agricultural populations the diet was not so poor as for the examined in-door operatives. For both classes, of course, poverty was found to tell least upon those

who were without families. And in both classes, but very especially among the agriculturalists, insufficiency of food does not nearly so much affect the married laborer as it affects his wife and children. For he, in order to do his work, must eat; particularly if the agricultural laborer be fed at his employer's house; and most of all if he, being unmarried, lives there, he will commonly fare well. Even sometimes he will feed to excess. But, at least, the wives and children of the examined agricultural populations, and doubtless, to some extent, even the laborers themselves, are in some counties miserably fed. The worst deficiencies, however, were found among the examined classes of in-door operatives. They, taken as a whole, are so ill fed that assuredly among them there must be many instances of severe and injurious privation. . . .

"Yet in this point of view there is, in my opinion, a very important sanitary context to be added. It must be remembered that privation of food is very reluctantly borne; and that, as a rule, great poorness of diet will only come when other privations have preceded it. Long before insufficiency of diet is a matter of hygienic concern, long before the physiologist would think of counting the grains of nitrogen and carbon which intervene between life and starvation, the household will have been utterly destitute of material comfort; clothing and fuel will have been even scantier than food; against inclemencies of weather there will have been no adequate protection, dwelling-space will have been stinted to the degree in which over-crowding produces or increases disease; of household utensils and furniture there will have been scarcely any; even cleanliness will have been found costly or difficult, and if there still be self-respectful endeavors to maintain it, every such endeavor will represent additional pangs of hunger. The home, too, will be where shelter can be cheapest bought; in quarters where commonly there is least fruit of sanitary supervision, least drainage, least scavenging, least suppression of public nuisances, least, or worst, water supply, and, if in town, least light and air. Such are the sanitary dangers to which poverty is almost certainly exposed when it is poverty enough to imply scantiness of food. And while the sum of these is of terrible magnitude against life, the mere scantiness of food is in itself of very serious moment. From such degrees of it as Dr. Smith found existing among the lowest-fed of the examined classes, there must, I feel assured, be much direct causation of ill-health, and the associated causes of disease must be greatly strengthened by it in their hurtfulness. These are painful reflections, especially when it is remembered that the poverty to which they advert is not the deserved poverty of idleness. In all cases it is the poverty of working populations. Indeed, as regards the in-door operatives the work which obtains the scanty pittance

of food is, for the most part, excessively prolonged. Yet evidently it is only in a qualified sense that the work can be deemed self-supporting. All disease of such populations, and whatever destitution results from it, must be treated at the public expense and on a very large scale; the nominal self-support can be only a circuit, longer or shorter, to pauperism."

In regard to the insufficient nourishment of a part of the class of agricultural laborers, important evidence is to be found in the Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture, issued at the close of last year, 1868.

"It is very commonly noticed," say the Commissioners, "that ill-paid labor is the least profitable, from the defect of physical power which is its common accompaniment. The same result is found to be produced by a bad dietary, although the wages may be (nominally) high, as in South Northumberland, where the old nourishing diet of the North has in late years been abandoned, in consequence of which 'it takes three men now to do the work of two.' Mr. Culley (one of the Assistant Commissioners) also quotes excellent authority for the fact that the ill-fed laborers of the South (of England) are inferior to those of the North in the same proportion as mentioned above, namely, as three to two." — p. xxxi.

Mr. Blackburn, who has farmed largely in Scotland and England, says: —

"Two Scotchmen will at any description of work equal three English laborers, owing partly to their superior physique, partly to the higher order of intelligence they bring to bear on their work." — App. I. p. 158.

It is a safe inference that the higher order of intelligence is likely to be associated with the superior physique, and that the superior physique depends on sufficiency of nourishment.*

When Burke wrote his "Thoughts on Scarcity," in 1795, he said: "It is the interest of the farmer that his work should be done with effect and celerity, and that cannot be done unless

* "The physical condition of the people," says the Rev. Charles Merivale, in his already cited paper in the *Contemporary Review*, "seems to me to be slowly and gradually, but still to some extent, deteriorating." "I am constrained to say that my own personal observation of the vital forces of our rural population is very disheartening."

the laborer is well fed, and otherwise found with such necessities of animal life, according to his habits, as may keep the body in full force, and the mind gay and cheerful." If gayety and cheerfulness could be supposed in Burke's time to be the occasional moods of the tiller of the soil, at present there can be no such notion. Cheerful toil has vanished from England; there is much patient industry, but the laborer cannot be gay; his life in country or in town is a cheerless and struggling existence.

With wages insufficient, in view of the other demands upon them, to supply himself and his family with the food requisite for health, it is not to be wondered at that the home of the common laborer is often an abode utterly unfit for human habitation. The magnitude of the evil of overcrowding in cities is acknowledged, and efforts in some degree successful have been made to check it; but, year by year, acre after acre of houses destitute of every proper attribute of healthy and comfortable homes is added to the area of the great centres of commerce and trade. Such square miles of squalid and degrading habitations as are now extending in the east of London never defiled the face of the earth before. The district is a disgrace to human nature itself.

In 1864 Dr. Hunter was employed, under authority of the Privy Council, to make an inquiry into the housing of the poorer population in towns. His inquiry extended to some fifty of the chief centres of population. His report gives a picture of misery on such a scale as happily is not to be found elsewhere in the world. "In parts of London and some of the towns," says Dr. Hunter, "the state of the tenements is sickening, the state of the people most pitiable." "It is not too much to say that life in parts of London and Newcastle is infernal." *

"There are about twenty colonies in London of about ten thousand persons each, whose miserable condition," Dr. Hunter declares, exceeds almost anything he has seen elsewhere in England, "and is almost entirely the result of their bad house accommodation; and the crowded and dilapidated con-

* Eighth Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council. 1865. Appendix No. 2. *On the Housing of the Poor in Towns*, p. 62.

dition of these houses is much worse than was the case twenty years ago." *

In different towns the degree and extent of the wretchedness of the habitations of the poor differ widely, but the reader of Dr. Hunter's report can hardly fail to agree with Mr. Simon's comment upon it, that, "speaking generally, it may be said that the evils [resulting from overcrowding, and from the use of dwellings which are permanently unfit for human habitation] are uncontrolled in England." †

The same language may in general be applied to the condition of the homes of the rural poor as to those of the urban poor.

An important paper by Dr. Hunter, on the house accommodation of rural laborers in the different parts of England, forms a portion of the Seventh Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, 1864.

"To the insufficient quantity and miserable quality," says Mr. Simon, "of the house accommodation generally had by our agricultural laborers almost every page of Dr. Hunter's report bears testimony. And gradually, for many years past, the state of the laborer in these respects has been deteriorating, house-room being now greatly more difficult for him to find, and when found, greatly less suitable to his needs, than perhaps for centuries has been the case. Especially within the last twenty or thirty years the evil has been in very rapid increase, and the household circumstances of the laborer are now in the highest degree deplorable."

Later evidence on this topic is to be found in the report already cited of the Commission on the employment of children and women in agriculture. In his report as Assistant

* Id. p. 89.

† The effect upon the health of the poorer inhabitants of the great cities, from the nature of their food, the character of their dwellings, and the general want of proper sanitary arrangements, is strikingly exhibited in the Quarterly Return of the Registrar-General for the three months ending on the 31st of December, 1868. A selection of fourteen great cities and towns of the kingdom, peopled by 6,441,525 inhabitants, exhibits a rate of mortality equal to 2.615 per cent per annum, which exceeds the rate in the least unhealthy districts in England by one half. "Why," asks the Registrar-General, "should [industrious, prosperous, and wealthy communities see their people perish year after year at these appalling rates without trying some radical and effectual measures of reform?"

Commissioner, the Rev. James Fraser, whose good judgment and moderation give great weight to the conclusions which he draws from a careful and extensive investigation, makes the following statement: —

“It will be observed upon reference, not only to my Notes of Meetings, but to the special body of evidence upon this subject collected out of my returns, that nothing can be more wide-spread than the feeling entertained, nothing can be stronger than the language used, about the general condition of the cottages of the peasantry, certainly in every one of the agricultural districts, almost in every one of the parishes, which I have visited. In one return they are described as ‘miserable,’ in a second as ‘deplorable,’ in a third as ‘detestable,’ in a fourth as ‘a disgrace to a Christian community.’ Even where they are spoken of in favorable terms it will generally be found that if adequate in quality they are inadequate in quantity; and some rich landowner, ‘lord of all he surveys,’ and having exercised his lordship by evicting so much of his population as were an eyesore, or were likely to become a burden to him, — still employing their labor, but holding himself irresponsible for their domicile, — has, by a most imperfect system of compensation, built a limited number of ornamental roomy cottages, which he fills with his own immediate dependents. Out of the three hundred parishes which I visited, I can only remember two — Donnington, in Sussex, and Down Amney, in Gloucestershire — where the cottage provision appeared to be both admirable in quality and sufficient in quantity; and I mention these cases with the greater pleasure, because in each the landowner, though not resident, is as willing to recognize, and as careful to discharge, his responsibilities as though he were.

“The majority of the cottages that exist in rural parishes are deficient in almost every requisite that should constitute a home for a Christian family in a civilized community. They are deficient in bedroom accommodation, very few having three chambers, and in some parishes the larger proportion only one; they are deficient in drainage and sanitary arrangements; they are imperfectly supplied with water; such conveniences as they have are often so situated as to become nuisances; they are full enough of draughts to generate any amount of rheumatism, and in many instances are lamentably dilapidated and out of repair. . . .

“It is impossible to exaggerate the ill effects of such a state of things in every aspect, — physical, social, economical, moral, intellectual. Physically, a ruinous, ill-drained cottage, ‘cribbed, cabined, confined,’ and over-crowded, generates any amount of disease, — fevers of every

type, catarrh, rheumatism, — as well as intensifies to the utmost that tendency to scrofula and phthisis which, from their frequent intermarriages and their low diet, abounds so largely among the poor. Socially, nothing can be more wretched than the condition of ‘open’ parishes like Docking, in Norfolk, and South Cerney, in Gloucestershire, in which have been poured remorselessly the scum and offscour of their ‘close’ neighbors. Economically, the imperfect distribution of cottages deprives the farmer of a large proportion of his effective labor-power. The employer who has no cottages to offer those whom he employs must either attract laborers by the offer of higher wages, or must content himself with refuse ; and, in either case, when he gets his man, gets him more or less enfeebled by the distance he has had to travel to his work. The moral consequences are fearful to contemplate. ‘I only wonder,’ writes one clergyman to me, ‘that our agricultural poor are as moral as they are.’ Modesty must be an unknown virtue, decency an unimaginable thing, where, in one small chamber, with the beds lying as thickly as they can be packed, father, mother, young men, lads, grown and growing-up girls — two, and sometimes three generations — are herded promiscuously ; where every operation of the toilet and of nature — dressings, undressings, births, deaths — is performed by each within the sight and hearing of all ; where children of both sexes, to as high an age as twelve or fourteen, or even more, occupy the same bed ; where the whole air is sensual, and human nature is degraded into something below the level of the swine. It is a hideous picture, and the picture is drawn from life. Mr. Clarke, of Norwich, can tell any one who will ask him tales of things he has himself seen, horrifying enough to make the very hair stand on end. The medical gentleman whose evidence I publish, assured me that cases of incest are anything but uncommon. We complain of the anti-nuptial unchastity of our women, of the loose talk and conduct of the girls who work in the fields, of the light way in which maidens part with their honor, and how seldom a parent’s or a brother’s blood boils with shame ; *here*, in cottage herding, is the sufficient account and history of it all.” — pp. 35, 36.

Evidence in regard to the habitations of the laboring poor in other portions of England, to a similar effect to that contained in this passage from Mr. Fraser’s report, is to be found in the reports of the other Assistant Commissioners in the same volume ; and a multitude of corroborative statements might be gathered from various sources. No one who has had an opportunity of personal observation can question the wide ex-

tent of suffering among the laboring classes from the wretched character of their dwellings. In the purely agricultural, in the mining, in the manufacturing districts, the evils arising from bad and insufficient house accommodation exist under various modifications, but everywhere to a shocking degree. And everywhere these evils are of a combined physical and moral nature, productive at once of ill health, ignorance, and vice.

The condition of education among the rural poor, and among other great bodies of English laborers, is what might be expected from the circumstances under which they live. The evidence collected by the Commission, whose report has been cited, shows that there are very few agricultural districts in which the children attend school after the age of twelve, and that usually by the time a boy is ten years old he is put to work, that his petty earnings may add something to the narrow resources of the household. Before he is twenty, in many instances, he has forgotten all of his little schooling. The poor themselves do not seem to be indifferent generally to the advantages of education, but the pressure of poverty is such that they cannot resist its compulsion, and against their will they are forced to submit to their children's growing up in ignorance.

"The agricultural laborer's wages," says Mr. Fraser, "are never up to the mark that can allow of his sacrificing the earnings of his child to higher considerations." And yet Mr. Fraser himself gives some most striking and affecting instances of the strenuous efforts made by the very poor to protect their own independence and to secure the blessings of instruction for their children. It must be a hard heart that can hear the stories of these laborers, given in their own words, without being moved to sympathy with them, and respect for them, and without being led to question the worth of a social system which brings about such results as are here displayed.

Mr. Fraser gives the following report of the statement of Mrs. Mary Cole, of Ingoldisthorpe:—

"Husband a shepherd, earns twelve shillings a week. Has brought up fourteen children, eight girls and six boys. Never let a girl of hers go into the fields; has got them all out into service. Turned them out

into the world pretty early, at fourteen years of age or so. They began to go into little places, just for their victuals. They are now all in good places, and are the greatest comforts that children can be to parents. Her husband can read and write, but she cannot. Not having any learning herself, she knew the value of it, so determined her girls, at any rate, should have as much as she could give them. There was no school at Ingoldisthorpe then, so she sent them to Snettisham. She had four of them, all girls, at school at one time, and paid tenpence a week for them. They stayed till they were about thirteen. She was often blamed by her neighbors for not sending her girls into the fields, but her heart was high and she would not. She said to herself, 'We'll see how it'll turn out. It's the ruination of the country girls going into the fields; they will make neither good wives nor good mothers; and what do they know of needlework?' They get bold and wild, and independent of their parents. Why, there's three of them joined together and took a house by themselves at Sedgeford, to be their own masters.' All her girls can read and write. When she was bringing up this family her husband only earned ten shillings a week, besides what he got at lambing time; her house-rent was three guineas, and she had not a mite of a garden. She had to work very hard herself, took in washing, but never went out into the fields. She is sure her family would have suffered for it if she had.

"Her boys have not had so much schooling as her girls, they had to go out to work so young. Three of them went out at six, and took one shilling a week. Her husband's master (this was a good many years ago) would have paid him off if he had not let them go to work. Her eldest son is now in Truman's brewery, in London; he has improved himself, and can write pretty well now. He wrote home to his parents to beg that his younger brothers might be kept at school, as he had found the good of a bit of learning. She has another son living in Herefordshire; he can neither read nor write, because he has been at work ever since he was six years old.

"The other two boys who are alive are poor scholars; they have been at night-school for two or three winters, but are too tired with their day's work when they get there to learn much.

"Her husband is a very sober man; brings home every threepence he earns, never drinks, and the quietest creature as ever was on the face of the earth.

"A good school is the greatest blessing as can be in a parish. Only wanted her children to read and write and do plain needlework; did not care about nonsensical learning. Never knew anything nonsensical taught at Ingoldisthorpe school.

"Sees many of her neighbors take no thought about their children's learning. Thinks it a great pity. Suppose they could afford to send their children to school as well as she could, if they had a mind. Never grumbled about what she had to pay. They were happy days when she used to hear their innocent prattle when they used to come home from school. Remembers the time when flour was 3s. 6d. a stone, and she had nine children at home, and nothing coming in but her husband's wages, which were then 'heined' (raised) to twelve shillings a week. They were hard times, surely, but by the blessing of God she struggled through, and never had a penny from the parish."

Such a story as this is a tale of endurance and effort that may be justly called heroic. If a corresponding spirit of sacrifice, and an equal sense of duty, could be roused among the rich, among those who are responsible for providing the means of education for the poor, the condition of England would very soon be changed.

"It is a common charge, brought against farmers as a class," says Mr. Edward Stanhope, in his report as Assistant Commissioner on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, "that they care little for education, and are rather disposed to discourage it. Now in many cases it cannot be denied that education is materially interfering with labor, because the object of the laboring class in seeking it is not to make their children better agricultural laborers, but to enable them to rise to a higher sphere in life. 'If I could only get him to be a scholar,' said one woman, 'he should never be a farm laborer.' 'If I were a scholar, I should n't be here,' said a laborer, 'and that's the reason why the farmers hold against this 'ere scholarship.' One cannot therefore be surprised that farmers should wish so to direct education as to prevent its having this effect as far as possible. 'Their view is that more than a little is very much too much; they are afraid that laborers will be spoiled for field work.' Their object is to keep the school down."

Shortsighted as are such views as these, there is little doubt that they prevail extensively, not only among farmers, but among manufacturers also, and other employers of labor. It hardly needs to be urged that no permanent improvement can be expected in the condition of the laborer unless the means of education be secured to him. This is not all that is needed, but it is one of the most pressing of his wants. Without education he neither knows how to better himself, nor is supplied

with the faculties adequate to overcome the difficulties which surround him and hinder his progress.

"It requires," said the Times, in a recent article, "both more knowledge and more intelligence than he possesses to appreciate the possibilities of migration and emigration. He knows no other lot open to him than that in which he was born, and the horizon of the village is his world. It is the imperative duty of his betters to assist in raising him from this ignorance and helplessness. There could be no greater mistake than to think, as we fear some employers do, that the discharge of this duty would injure their own interests. Nothing is more for their interest than that the intelligence of the laborer should be increased. It is certainly for the interest of the whole country, and the country has the right, which it must sooner or later exercise, of insisting that the corresponding duty shall not be neglected."*

In a recent essay entitled "What can be done for the Agricultural Laborer?" Professor Fawcett says: "It is sometimes almost triumphantly said — I have heard it in the House of Commons — that the agricultural laborer is not so badly off as many who work in our large towns"; † and, indeed, it is quite true that a workman in London, or any other of the crowded cities, earning eighteen or twenty shillings a week, is hardly more prosperous than the laborer in the country with ten or twelve. Mr. Mechi, whose experience as a farmer, at Tiptree Hall, in Essex, is well known, writing to the Times, on the 26th of January of this year, concerning agricultural laborers, asserts that the condition of the laborer has improved of late years, and mentioning that the present rate of wages in his neighborhood is eleven and twelve shillings, he goes on to say: —

"I know of some cottages in this neighborhood where families of seven children have had only one small bedroom for the nine members of the family. Many cottages are in a dilapidated condition. . . . Very few laborers over forty can read or write. . . . Married couples with large young families are rather sorely pressed." But he adds: "I am inclined to think favorably of the condition of our country laborers as compared with those in towns and cities."

What then must the condition of the latter be?

* The Times, February 16, 1869.

† *Macmillan's Magazine*, October, 1868.

It is from the laboring classes that the vast army of paupers is recruited. On any given day of the year there are about a million men, women, and children in receipt of public relief, and known as paupers. The numbers are a little less in summer than in winter, and in a year of prosperity than in a year of commercial depression. But for twenty years the army has never been composed of less than eight hundred thousand individuals, and has frequently risen to over a million.*

The returns furnished by the Poor Law Board do not afford the means of ascertaining the total number of persons who receive relief in the course of a year; they merely give the numbers of those in receipt of relief on certain days. It would doubtless be an under-estimate to compute the number of persons who are obliged to seek public relief at some period of the year at double that of the paupers on any given day. If we add to this number the number of those who are more or less dependent on private charity for a livelihood, and who probably amount to several hundred thousand, we are brought to the conclusion that England supports as paupers not less than one twentieth of her population, while much more than a tenth of her people stand so near the verge of pauperism as to be for a portion of every year dependent upon public or private charity. And, still further, though in the absence of exact statistics it is impossible to make a precise statement, it seems certain that not less than one quarter of the people of England are at some period of their lives dependent for subsistence upon public or private charity.

The returns of the Poor Law Board show that the money spent in public relief of the poor during the last twenty years has amounted upon an average to the annual sum of £ 5,831,000, or enough to keep over one hundred and twelve thousand men at work at a wage of one pound each per week. And this enormous outlay for the relief of suffering seems to have no effect in removing its causes. The complaint is common that pauperism is increasing, and though it does not appear that the number of persons in England more or less dependent upon public charity

* For a summary statement of the mean number of paupers in receipt of relief at one time in each year since 1849, see Twentieth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board, 1867 - 68, p. 11.

for support has increased out of proportion to the growth of the population, it is obvious from the returns that vast as is the sum expended in public and private charity it does nothing to diminish the sources of pauperism.

In a paper on the Charities of London, read at a meeting of the Association for the Prevention of Pauperism and Crime in the Metropolis, on the 17th of December, Dr. Hawksley stated, as the result of a careful investigation, that

“At least £7,000,000 a year are employed in dealing with the requirements of London poverty and pauperism. It results that if one eighth of the whole metropolitan population — that is, 400,000 persons — were entirely dependent on the other seven eighths, the sum named would supply to each £17 a head per annum for every man, woman, and child, or to every family of five persons, £85 per annum, and leave £50,000 to pay the expenses of collection and distribution. Notwithstanding this great expenditure, pauperism and crime are advancing far beyond the relative increase of population [in London]. During the last ten years, 1858–1868, the population of London has increased one sixth, but the pauper part of it has increased five tenths, or half.”*

Another gentleman, Dr. Stallard, who has given great attention to the subject, estimates the sum spent annually in London for charitable purposes at over £8,500,000. “This sum is equal to 4s. 3d. per week, all the year round, for eight hundred thousand persons, and ought to be more than sufficient for the relief of every form of misery.”†

Whether we accept the higher or the lower of these estimates as nearest the truth, each of them is alike evidence, not of effective and well-directed charity, but, in great part, of the misdirected, wasteful, and corrupting bounty of thoughtless humane impulses and sentiments, and of selfish efforts to purchase, by an expenditure of money, immunity from personal exertion, and personal sacrifice. Much of the money thus lavishly poured out in miscalled charity simply aggravates the

* “The Charities of London.” By Thomas Hawksley, M. D. London: 1869, pp. 7.

† “Pauperism, Charity, and Poor Laws.” By J. H. Stallard, M. B. London: 1869. 8vo. pp. 18. The Times published, February 11, 1869, an elaborate Synopsis of Reports of some Metropolitan Charities, which, so far as it extended, confirmed the estimates of Dr. Stallard.

evils which it is meant to relieve ; for while it tends to educate a predatory class of degraded professional paupers, it fails to assist the independent poor, struggling for existence, and tottering on the brink of pauperism, and its consequent degradation.

Very recently well-directed efforts have been made on the part of government for a better administration of the State charity, and on the part of individuals to secure a proper co-operation among the charitable institutions, and to give a proper direction to private benevolence. But no sufficient remedy for the evils of the present system of public and private almsgiving is to be found, short of an absolute reform in many of its most common methods, springing from a quickened sense among the prosperous of their responsibility toward the poor.

We have seen that millions of people in this country — one of the richest in the world — barely drag out existence upon a pittance insufficient to secure the food necessary for health, living in abodes unfit alike for the physical and moral needs of life, and unable, both from their own circumstances and from the indifference, to use no stronger word, of those whose dependants they are, to obtain such education as might invigorate their efforts for improvement.

No language can be too strong to characterize the disgrace and the danger to a civilized community of a state of society which thus perpetuates the misery of a great proportion of its members, which thus degrades humanity by condemning it to conditions which inevitably generate ignorance and vice, and are the fruitful sources of crime.

It cannot be too distinctly stated that the poorer classes have not the power at present to raise themselves from the degradation into which they have sunk ; that the material conditions of their life so deprive them of hope, of stimulus to exertion, and of vital energy, that they are in great measure free from responsibility as to the results of these conditions upon moral character.

It cannot be too well understood that the rich, the prosperous, and the powerful are directly responsible for the worst existing evils of society, and that they are bound not only by

general motives of humanity, but by special motives of self-interest, to exert themselves to a far greater degree than they seem now to have the thought of doing for their remedy and removal. Bound by special motives of self-interest, — for a society in which an overwhelming majority of its members have no reason to desire the stability of its institutions, but every reason to look forward to change, however violent and destructive in its nature, as likely to effect an improvement in their condition, is constantly exposed to the risk of revolution and entire reorganization. And even if this were not the case, the improvement of the condition of the working classes would still be a matter of most immediate self-interest to those who desire the continuance of their own material prosperity, because on the improvement of these classes, in conformity with the general progress in the world, depends the permanence of the wealth and power of England. If the poor are degenerating; if their physical vigor is diminishing; if larger numbers of them are falling into dependence upon public or private charity; if the motives to independence are becoming weaker, — then the decline of the state has set in, and the stream of wealth and prosperity is shrinking at its source.

But against such considerations as these it is urged: “If we be not doing all we might, we are doing much. Every year more attention is given to education; every year there is an extension of sanitary reforms; and if the condition of the poor is deplorable, it is due, not to the indifference and selfishness of the rich and the powerful, but in great measure to the operation of laws of political economy over which we have no control.”

The laws of political economy which are often thus referred to are mainly those relating to the distribution of wealth, and especially those which are supposed to regulate wages by the principle of supply and demand as applied to labor.

On this topic especially a vast deal of sophistry is current. The laws of political economy are not sufficient by themselves to regulate the relations of men one to another. If they be properly understood and interpreted, they undoubtedly, so far as their jurisdiction extends, correspond with and confirm the dictates of that morality which finds its motive and sanction

in the happiness of mankind. But the variety of dispositions among men, and the complication of their interests, are so great, that the laws of political economy can rarely be absolutely applied, even when fully understood, to the direction of their concerns. The laws which are theoretically true concerning the accumulation and distribution of wealth are, in their practical application, continually subject to modification by the moral conditions of individuals and races. But even the true nature of these laws is frequently misunderstood, and the false interpretation of them may become one of the most serviceable instruments of oppression, and one of the most dangerous weapons of selfishness. A striking illustration of this fact is afforded by the prevalence of the doctrine that the sole economical consideration which is to determine the rate of wages at a given place and time is the demand for and supply of labor. Pushed to its consequences, this doctrine leads the employer of labor to take advantage of every circumstance which may promote an abundant supply of the kind of labor which he requires, without regard to the consequences of such a course to the health and happiness of the laborer. The tendency of such a doctrine, applied without restriction, in the present state of the world, is to the degradation of the laborer, and the destruction of his freedom, even to the point of actual or virtual enslavement. The question is often discussed as if, in the competition of the market, the employer and the laborer stood on equal terms, and had equal power in the determination of the rate of wages. But this is very seldom the case. As a rule, the employer has on his side two grounds of superiority to the laborer, — the possession of capital, and the possession of more cultivated intelligence. The first makes the employment of labor more or less a matter of choice with him; the second enables him to vary his pursuits. But, in the actual condition of the laboring classes, the laborer has little or no choice in the matter of employment, and must take such as is offered him, and upon the terms on which it is offered, or must starve. The result is that, in a densely peopled country, employers of labor in the chief fields of industry — in all those which require of the workman no special intelligence — have the power to determine the rate of

wages; and, as long as the present narrow ideas of political economy prevail, custom will do little to prevent competition from producing its legitimate effect in the lowering of the standard of wages to a minimum. Mr. Mill, in his chapter on wages, says: "In this country there are few kinds of labor of which the remuneration would not be lower than it is if the employer took the full advantage of competition." But even if this be true, it is safe to assert that in many of the most important branches of industry the employer frequently takes advantage of competition to a degree which keeps the laborer in dependence, and even in want of the necessities of healthy living. No one who investigates the relations of capital and labor can doubt that in the long run a disproportionate share of the profits of production falls to the capitalist,* and that the distribution of wealth consequently grows more and more unequal and unsatisfactory.

It is a truth too often forgotten that, in the present complex and unorganized condition of society, many of the laws of political economy, if applied without restriction to the regulation of human relations, work nothing but misery. In an ideal state of society, in which every man should be intelligent and independent the rate of wages might perhaps be safely determined by competition. But in the actual condition of society, political economy itself teaches that reliance upon competition alone to fix the rate of wages may, and often, indeed, must, operate in violation of those superior laws of the science which determine the permanent prosperity of mankind, and regulate its advance. Competition at any given moment may establish a rate of wages which shall be destructive of the health and happiness of large sections of the community. In its turn it needs to be controlled in its operation by higher laws.

To remove the existing evils two great remedies have been proposed, each tending to a diminution of population, and consequently of competitors for labor. The first of these is emigration. But it is plain that this is a mere palliative. The

* For a striking illustration of this fact, see the very instructive evidence given before the 'Trades' Union Commission by Mr. James Nasmyth, the eminent machinist; especially questions 19,181-19,189, from the answers to which it appeared that Mr. Nasmyth had paid 21s. a week to a man whose work brought him in a profit of £ 6. — Tenth Report, 1868, p. 66.

fields for emigrants will in time, perhaps not long hence, be closed, while the increase of the population of the country from which the emigrants depart is likely to be quickened by the fact of their leaving a void to be filled. The second is, a limit self-imposed on the increase of families, a restraint upon the instinct of population. That this latter remedy, if it could be applied, would be effectual in the degree of its application is certain ; but in the present low moral and intellectual state of the working classes, it seems very doubtful whether the motives to self-restraint can be made so effectual with them as to lead to any great results in this direction. Legal restraints upon marriage might effect something, but their operation must be very partial.

What, then, can be suggested as likely to lead to a more suitable rate of wages being established as the recompense for labor ? There is no single panacea. But the ground upon which improvement must rest is that of education, — education of the rich as well as of the poor. The direct result of education in the case of the poor would be to make them masters of themselves, to open new fields of labor for them, and to develop in them those moral dispositions which would lead both to a restraint upon population, and to the formation of habits of economy and thrift. The education which the rich especially require is in its nature moral, — an education in social duties, and in that enlightened self-interest which sees its advantage, not in a selfish accumulation of wealth regardless of the claims of those who assist in its production, but in such a division of profits as should raise the general standard of comfort.

Under existing circumstances, there can be no object so important for the government of England as the promotion of education. It cannot be accomplished unless efforts in behalf of education be accompanied by the widest and most stringent measures of sanitary reform, which shall secure to the poor such habitations as are not detrimental to health, as are not inconsistent with a tolerable degree of physical comfort, and in which the preservation of moral purity is not impossible.

The most strenuous, unselfish, and foreseeing action is demanded for the preservation of what is good in the existing

social order, and for the remedy of evils which are now of such magnitude as to be standing menaces to the very life of the state. A very different spirit is required for dealing with these evils from that which is displayed in Parliament, or in public opinion as expressed by the majority of its leading organs. Unless the ruling classes, upon whom rests the responsibility for remedial effort, are aroused from their selfish inactivity to a new sense of duty and to new exertions, no prophet is needed to foretell the approaching overthrow of social order. Even now the question with all thoughtful men is whether the evils of the state have not reached a point beyond legal remedy. To many it already seems that only the red hands of violent revolution can tear down the barriers by which, in the midst of the highest refinements of civilization, great masses of the people are shut up in a close Jew's quarter of misery, ignorance, and degradation, and reduced to the moral level of savages. The forces of conservatism in England are enormous; they are banded together, in many instances, to maintain an unjust order of things, and to repress the healthy life of the community. But in proportion to their strength is the accumulation of the pent-up forces of destruction. A small minority of the population are in possession of the main instruments of compulsion, but in the long run the great majority must rule, — if in no other way, by the exhibition and use of the physical force of which acting in combination they are the masters.

The progress of democratic ideas in political affairs is gradually transferring the legislative power to the majority of the people. But the transference of this power is so slow, and the majority have become so brutalized, that the very process is full of danger. It is a great, though a very common mistake, to suppose that the mass of the laboring classes and of the poor in England are not discontented. They have learned to hide their thoughts; but they feel, and, to some degree, they know, that the existing social order is unjust to them, and their discontent, though smothered and ineffectual at present, might easily be wrought into a fury against which all the defences of actual institutions would be as vain as were the walls of the Bastille against the passions of the mob of the Faubourg St. Antoine.

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.